CONSUMER TIME

THE STORY BEHIND THE SHIELD

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes, the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME, by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
And here are Mrs. Freyman and Johnny.

5. FREYMAN: Johnny, I'm curious.

6. JOHN: About what?

7. FREYMAN: About a can of peas.

8. JOHN: What about a can of peas?

9. FREYMAN: They're on my shelf.

10. JOHN: You're curious about 'em?

11. FREYMAN: About something on them.

12. JOHN: On them?

13. FREYMAN: On the label.

14. JOHN: What's it say?

15. FREYMAN: Oh, it says lots of things. But there's one thing...

16. JOHN: What would that be?

17. FREYMAN: Where it says "U. S. Grade A".

18. JOHN: That means they're good peas.

19. FREYMAN: I know.

20. JOHN: Then what are you curious about?

21. FREYMAN: I want to know why they're good.

22. JOHN: Oh, I see.

23. FREYMAN: And I want to know about the label "U. S. Grade B". What that means...

24. JOHN: That would mean they're not so good...

25. FREYMAN: Oh, I don't think so, necessarily.

26. JOHN: But when it says Grade B, or Grade C, they couldn't be as good as...

27. FREYMAN: I know...but that may simply mean the peas would be just a different size, or color.

28. JOHN: But still as good as Grade A?

29. FREYMAN: That's what I want to know.

30. JOHN: We can find that out.

31. FREYMAN: There's something else.

32. JOHN: You're curious about?

33. FREYMAN: Yes.

34. JOHN: On a can of peas?

35. FREYMAN: On a lot of cans of food.

36. JOHN: What is it?

37. FREYMAN: Where it says "Packed Under Continuous Inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture."

38. JOHN: Oh that!

39. FREYMAN: You know what it means?

40. JOHN: Means the food's inspected.

41. FREYMAN: What does the "continuous" mean?

42. JOHN: Means they inspect it all the time.

43. FREYMAN: That doesn't sound like the whole story.

44. JOHN: Then we'll find out...

45. FREYMAN: That's a good idea.

46. JOHN: Because you're curious...

47. FREYMAN: Curious about what "U. S. Grades A, B, and C" stand for!

48. JOHN: And what "continuous inspection" means.

49. FREYMAN: You see it on so many cans of food nowadays, you just can't ignore it.

50. JOHN: Then we'll do a little asking.

51. FREYMAN: Shall we do it now?

52. JOHN: That's what we're here for on CONSUMER TIME. If you're curious, Mrs. Freyman...a lot of other people must be too.

53. SOUND: KNOCK ON DOOR

54. CANNER: Come in!

55. FREYMAN: We're Mrs. Freyman and Johnny.

56. CANNER: Of CONSUMER TIME.

57. FREYMAN: And you're a canner who uses the continuous inspection service of the Department of Agriculture. We need your help, advice, and assistance.

58. CANNER: I'll be glad to do what I can.

59. JOHN: Mrs. Freyman, here...is curious about what goes on behind the "U. S." label on your canned foods.

60. FREYMAN: I want to know what the grades mean. And what goes on in "continuous inspection". I'm the kind of consumer who likes to know just what she's buying.

61. CANNER: You're very wise. And I think I can give you most of the answers about that.

62. FREYMAN: Shall we sit here?

63. CANNER: No, we're leaving.

64. JOHN: Leaving already?

65. CANNER: Yes....we have a lot to see. Follow me.

66. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS...DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES...FACTORY AND CROWD BABBLE

67. FREYMAN: Why where's this?

68. CANNER: We're now in a canning factory. You can take great liberties on a radio program. Be anywhere you want in no time at all. See over there...the woman in white? She is a government inspector.

69. JOHN: And what kind of food is being canned in this plant?

70. CANNER: Corn. Come this way.

71. FREYMAN: Johnny...isn't this wonderful. We're going to get answers to our questions first-hand.

72. JOHN: You bet!

73. CANNER: We're seeing now what's known as "continuous inspection". You were asking what that means on the labels.

74. FREYMAN: Yes we were.

75. CANNER: Well, it means simply that the food going through this plant is inspected all along the way. A government inspector begins the job when the trucks of vegetables or fruit are unloaded at the platform. He (or she) follows carefully all the stages of processing. He checks the food when it comes out at the end of the line, in gleaming cans and jars. And he's on the spot to see how the cases of canned foods are stacked up...so he can put out a few random samples...to be tested for grading.

76. JOHN: So continuous inspection means just what it says.

77. FREYMAN: What is the inspector doing right here?

78. CANNER: Well...let's ask her. Right here, the corn is moving along on an endless belt. The workers are sorting the good ears from the bad...then they go to that machine that takes off the husks and silks in one operation. What's your job right now, Miss Justin?

79. JUSTIN: I'm making my second trip through the plant, this morning to see that everything's clean and spotless.

80. FREYMAN: Is that part of inspection?

81. JUSTIN: Sure it is...and I have to see that all these workers are wearing clean aprons, rubber gloves, and head coverings.

82. FREYMAN: In other words...see that the food is handled in the most sanitary way possible.

83. JUSTIN: That's it.

84. JOHN: And what about the machinery, do you have to watch over that too?

85. JUSTIN: . . . . . Yes, machinery on this assembly line has to be clean, and I do mean clean. As soon as it begins to clutter up with pieces of corn silk or husks...the machinery is stopped and is given a thorough scrub-down.

86. CANNER: It often has to be cleaned several times a day, doesn't it?

87. JUSTIN: Yes, we see that it gets a thorough cleaning whenever it needs it.

88. SOUND: FADING OFF

89. CANNER: Thanks a lot, Miss Justin. Let's move on, Mrs. Freyman and Johnny. You get the picture here, don't you?

90. FREYMAN: Everything certainly has to be immaculate in this plant.

91. CANNER: Yes...we want our housekeeping and canning practices to measure up to the standards of fine homemaking in your own kitchen.

92. JOHN: Well, gosh if I were a housewife, I'd be glad to know that's what continuous inspection means on canned foods...it's been put up in such a clean, healthful way.

93. CANNER: You were speaking of "canned food"...let's say "processed food" ...really...because our inspectors also handle inspection of frozen and dried fruits and vegetables.

94. JOHN: Where are we going now?

95. CANNER: Right now during the peak of our canning season, we have two inspectors on the job. There's a fellow around here, if I can find him...he's been an inspector for a long time...and he can tell us more about this business.

96. FREYMAN: Oh, I see.

96A. CANNER: There's the man I'm looking for. (CALLING) Mr. Brown... can you leave what you're doing for a minute?

97. SOUND: CLANKING OF SMALL MACHINE

98. BROWN: (COMING IN) Oh hello, there.

99. CANNER: These folks...Mrs. Freyman and Johnny...are getting the inside story of canned food inspection...and I told 'em you're an old timer in the business.

100. BROWN: Oh, I see. Wait'll I adjust this machine...

101. SOUND: OUT

102. FREYMAN: One thing we want to know is...how long has continuous inspection of canned foods been going on?

103. BROWN: Well, this is the 8th year, although other government inspection of canned fruits and vegetables has been in effect over 20 years. You know this continuous inspection was started more or less as an experiment, back in '39. It all came about at the request of canners and consumers...so the Department of Agriculture approved one plant for the experiment. The next year, three more plants were approved.

104. FREYMAN: How many plants have continuous inspection now?

105. BROWN: Oh, near a hundred.

106. FREYMAN: Well, that's growing up fast, isn't it?

107. BROWN: We think so. The experiment was started to prove whether consumers like the idea of knowing that food is put up under strictly sanitary conditions...

108. CANNER: And so...to carry out the packers' interest in getting a good product to the consumer...continuous inspection is now a reality.

109. JOHN: Can any plant have this inspection service...simply by asking?

110. BROWN: Well...the Department has to approve it first. We go out and look over the plant...see if it comes up to specifications. If it's well built...well managed...if it's nearby where the crop is grown, so that the food arrives fresh...and if the management is willing to comply with our rules and regulations...we say O.K. we'll do it.

111. JOHN: Who pays for continuous inspection?

112. BROWN: The packer pays the actual cost of inspection.

113. FREYMAN: Then, do I pay more for foods that have the "U. S. inspected" label?

114. CANNER: We've found it costs us about four-ten-thousandths of a cent a can. I'd say you wouldn't notice it, Mrs. Freyman.

115. FREYMAN: (LAUGH) I guess not.

116. JOHN: What was that odd looking machine you were working with, Mr. Brown?

117. BROWN: That's what you call a penetrometer. It's a pressure machine to test the tenderness of the kernels of corn...one of the tests which decide the grade.

118. CANNER: Now that's the next part of your story.

119. BROWN: Grading?

120. CANNER: Yes.

121. FREYMAN: That's good. Now, Johnny we'll learn what Grades A, B, and C really mean.

122. CANNER: But before we do it...Mr. Brown...is there anything we've left out?

123. BROWN: They've seen Miss Justin on the job...inspecting for cleanliness?

124. CANNER: Yes, they've seen that.

125. BROWN: And did they watch this corn as it went through the huskers, washers, cutters, and sorters...as the inspector kept a close eye on all that was happening?

126. FREYMAN: We saw a lot of that, yes...

127. BROWN: You know our job doesn't stop, even when the cans are sealed and put in the cookers. We have to check the temperatures all the time.

128. CANNER: That's right.....we don't take our eye off of 'em, until they're in the warehouse.

129. BROWN: Well...that brings us to the grading. That's what I'm about to work on now. Won't you all sit down?

130. FREYMAN: Thank you....

131. BROWN: Now, I was just out to the warehouse...and I pulled out some of these sample cans.

132. JOHN: What do you consider a fair sample?

133. BROWN: Oh, we take about one can out of every thousand. That gives us a good-cross-section.

134. JOHN: I see... (ACCOMPANYING SOUND)

135. BROWN: Now I'll open up the cans first off... Looks pretty, doesn't it. Fresh canned, golden corn!

136. FREYMAN: It certainly does...

137. BROWN: Now see, the idea is, I have to decide whether this corn is Grade A, or Grade B, or Grade C. Or, you can call it Fancy, Extra Standard, or Standard.

138. FREYMAN: Now wait...some of the canned foods on my shelf say "U.S. Grade A" or "U. S. Grade B"...and other foods simply say the Grade without the U. S. Is there any difference?

139. BROWN: Sure. The grades are the same all right. They're according to Government standards. But when they have the "U.S." in front of 'em, it means that the food has been packed under this continuous inspection we've been seeing.

140. FREYMAN: Oh, I see...

141. BROWN: That's so you know at a glance the food's been inspected. You'll also find the inspection information on the label.

142. FREYMAN: That's a good think to know.

143. BROWN: Now, here we go. I'll just give a kind of demonstration here, because I know your time is short. But first off, let's test for color.

144. FREYMAN: The yellower the better?

145. BROWN: The brighter the better. Some corn varieties are deeper yellow than others, but the golden-yellow color must not be dull.

146. JOHN: What's that you've got...a "color dictionary"?

147. BROWN: That's exactly right. See all these little squares of color? Let's pick out the yellows... Here's a good one, the ideal color.

148. FREYMAN: That's pretty.

149. BROWN: Well if the corn's anywhere near this color...we give it the largest number of points. And so it is. Look, that's pretty close to perfect.

150. FREYMAN: I should say so!

151. BROWN: So it passes the color test, for Grade A corn.

152. JOHN: What's next.

153. BROWN: Next let's see that there aren't any pieces of dark corn silk, cobs or husks or discolored kernels in this can. I'll pour it out in this pan here...(SOUND) Nope! Doesn't seem to be a sign.

154. JOHN: That looks like very good corn.

155. BROWN: Well, this is a good packing plant. Most of the canned stuff that comes out of here is Grade A.

156. FREYMAN: What's the next test?

157. BROWN: Well...see this is cream-style corn. I have to give it a certain number of points for consistency. It's supposed to be heavy and creamlike.

158. FREYMAN: It looks good to me.

159. BROWN: Yes, I haven't any problem here. Sometimes, the cream is too thick, or too thin. Or the corn isn't young and tender.

160. JOHN: And those things would make it Grade B instead of A.

161. BROWN: We'll come to that. We mustn't think badly of Grades B and C...now, because they mean mighty good food...as we'll see.

162. FREYMAN: You have to taste your sample, don't you Mr. Brown, to see if it's good?

163. BROWN: Yes...it has to be sweet...and we test for the tenderness too.

164. JOHN: Are you the one who decides on the taste?

165. BROWN: Yes, but if there is no abnormal flavor...sour or salty...we can tell by the tenderness what the taste is. The harder the kernels, the more starchy they are and the less sweet.

166. FREYMAN: Goodness, there's so much that goes into this grading business.

167. BROWN: Sure. And believe me a lot of research, in cooperation with the packers and food growers has gone in to deciding these grades. They're still doing research on it.

168. JOHN: What else do you have to do before you can give this corn a grade?

169. BROWN: I have to see if the kernels are all about the same size. And there's a lot more. But suppose we just say that this can of corn is going to turn out to be Grade A. Now you'd use this corn, Mrs. Freyman, as a side dish on your table.

170. FREYMAN: I see...

171. BROWN: I mean it's pretty to look at...has a delicate flavor. Kind of thing you want to serve when company comes.

172. JOHN: What would Grade B corn be like, Mr. Brown?

173. BROWN: I'm coming to that. Grade B corn is mighty good. It's just as good for you. It's swell for making puddings and casserole dishes, for instance.

174. FREYMAN: Does it look different?

175. BROWN: Well...Grade B foods are in general, not quite as carefully selected. But they're very satisfactory for most everyday uses.

176. JOHN: And Grade C?

177. BROWN: Well, if this corn were Grade C, the kernels would be more starchy and not so tender...the color would be a little duller than this. And the consistency of the cream might be a little thinner, or thicker than this Grade A sample. It might also have some little bits of dark corn silk or some darkened kernels.

178. FREYMAN: But how about the food value?

179. BROWN: Grade C vegetables are good, wholesome, and nutritious. If you are a thrifty housewife, you'd do well to buy Grade C fruits and vegetables for many uses. They're usually a very good buy.

180. FREYMAN: For instance, Grade C corn would be good to use in soup.

181. BROWN: You have the idea exactly.

182. FREYMAN: Well, we've found out a lot today.

183. JOHN: We certainly have, Mrs. Freyman.

184. FREYMAN: From now on, I'm going to look for the little seal that says "Packed under continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture."

185. JOHN: And you'll also know the meaning of the Grades you see on the canned and frozen foods you buy.

186. FREYMAN: Because as I said before...

187. JOHN: "You're the kind of shopper who likes to know what she's buying".

188. FREYMAN: That's me.

189. JOHN: Thanks, Mr. Brown, for the demonstration.

190. BROWN: It's been a pleasure. And to sum up...about a hundred packing plants in the country...have continuous inspection service by the Department of Agriculture. More plants are asking for this service, since the war...and a greater variety of products will be available under "U. S. " grade labels. So...look for the inspection shield, when you buy processed foods.

191. FREYMAN: Thanks, we will.

192. JOHN: And now Mrs. Freyman...back to the studio.

193. FREYMAN: And about next week's program...

194. JOHN: We're going to tell about chickens and eggs...

195. FREYMAN: They're plentiful right now?

196. JOHN: They certainly are. Poultry is an especially good buy at your gorcer's.

197. FREYMAN: So we'll hear all about chickens...next week...

198. JOHN: Be with us then, for another edition of....

199. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

200. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

201. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

202. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Christine Kempton, is produced by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C.

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